ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An e-mail firewall (105) applies policies to e-mail messages (204) between a first site and a plurality of second sites in accordance with a plurality of administrator selectable policies (216). The firewall comprises a simple mail transfer protocol (SMTP) relay (202) for causing the e-mail messages (204) to be transmitted between the first site and selected ones of the second sites. A plurality of policy managers (216) enforce - administrator selectable policies. The policies, such as encryption and decryption policies, comprise at least a first source/destination policy (218), at least a first content policy (202) and at least a first virus policy (224). The policies are characterized by a plurality of administrator selectable criteria (310), a plurality of administrator selectable exceptions (312) to the criteria and a plurality of administrator selectable actions (314, 316, 322) associated with the criteria and exceptions. The policy managers comprise an access manager (218) for restricting transmission of e-mail messages (204) between the first site and the second sites in accordance with the source/destination policy (218). The policy managers (216) further comprise a content manager (220) for restricting transmission of e-mail messages (204) between the first site and the second sites in accordance with the content policy (220), and a virus manager (224) for restriction transmission of e-mail messages (204) between the first site and the second sites in accordance with the virus policy (224).

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